



Safer Schools Survey (Second Phase November 2008)

Introduction

This report provides an overview of young people's experiences and perceptions of bullying behaviour in East Sussex. The data relates to a second cohort of young people who took part in the Safer Schools Survey during national anti-bullying week in November 2008 and builds on existing data gathered from the first cohort during the previous academic year 2007-08.

Rationale

The Survey Schools Survey (SSS) commissioned by East Sussex County Council forms part of its continuing commitment to collect robust data to inform service development and best practice. Now in its second year, the aims of the SSS are:

- ✓ To embed the SSS within schools so that data on bullying behaviour is collected annually.
- ✓ Provide accurate baseline information so the effectiveness and impact of individual anti-bullying initiatives can be assessed.

National Context & TellUs3 Survey

Statistical evidence from the TellUs3 questionnaire (OFSTED: 2008a)¹ in which almost 150,000 pupils in Year 6, 8 and 10 took part nationally, found 48% of young people reported being bullied in the last 12 months and of these, 5% said that they were bullied most days, with local TellUs3 data of 48.7% and 6% respectively (OFSTED: 2008b)². Nationally, figures from the TellUs3 survey show an overall increase in the number of young people who report being bullied, with a slight decrease in young people who report being bullied 'most days', with these trends reflected in East Sussex.

Local data from the TellUs3 survey varied significantly from that of the SSS where overall bullying behaviour was found to be 29% (ESCC: 2008)³ and 30.8% for the two cohort groups who have taken part. However, while not necessarily measuring the same thing, those who report being bullied 'most days' (TellUs3: 2008b) and those who experience 'a lot of bullying' (SSS) were identical at 6%.

Methods

The SSS is an on-line survey. Following the first cohort of schools who took part in the survey in the summer 2008, the second cohort of secondary schools were invited to take part in the survey in the lead up to, and during, national anti-bullying week 2008.

Schools were encouraged to administer the survey with the whole school population. Where this was not possible then a sample of no less than 40% of the entire population was recommended, in order to provide more statistically reliable data.

¹ OFSTED (2008a) TellUs3 National Report. London: OFSTED

² OFSTED (2008a) TellUs3 National Report. London: OFSTED

³ East Sussex County Council (2008) Safer Schools Survey Results 2008

Confidentiality

Young people complete the questionnaire anonymously. A summary report outlining the key findings in relation to each individual school is fed back confidentially to members of the Senior Management Team. It is then the responsibility of each school to decide how to feedback to pupils and other stakeholders.

Sample profile

A second cohort of 12 schools took part in the survey, with 3917 young people taking part. Of these, the number of male and females was almost identical with a relatively even distribution of young people across the national curriculum year groups 7-11.

Key findings

a) *About your school*

The majority of young people's perceptions about how safe and caring their school is were extremely positive. However, findings suggest that young people's perception of safety at school, how caring their school is, together with their enjoyment of school, are influenced by their experiences of bullying behaviour.

"Do you feel safe at school?" 91% of young people answered positively to this question. Of the 9% (368) of young people who said that they did not feel safe in school, half of these 50% (183) reported being bullied.

How well does your school deal with bullying behaviour? In line with the TellUs3 (3b) survey and as an indicator to measure future progress, additional questions have been added to gauge the extent to which young people feel that bullying behaviour is effectively dealt with by their school. Local TellUs3 data found 31% of young people stated their school dealt positively with bullying behaviour while this figure was shown to be almost double at 60% when the same question was asked as part of the SSS. Moreover, in the TellUs3 those reporting their school dealt 'not very well' or 'badly' with bullying behaviour were 49% while this figure was significantly lower at 24% for those taking part in the SSS.

"Does your school care for/support pupils who are worried, sad or upset?" Over three-quarters of young people (3034) answered this question positively, 15% said they do not know, with 8% answering negatively.

Table 1 Things your school has or does to prevent bullying or support young people who are being bullied?

	Yes	No
School Anti-Bullying Policy	62%	31%
Assemblies where bullying is discussed	75%	18%
Classroom lessons about bullying	63%	30%
Staff take bullying seriously	72%	22%
The school takes action against homophobic bullying	59%	34%
Posters/leaflets displayed around the school on bullying	61%	32%
Playground work around bullying	56%	38%
Peer support, buddies, befrienders or mentors	62%	31%
Counselling service	57%	36%

b) *Getting on with others*

Additional questions relating to the community cohesion agenda were added to the survey, to enable the local authority and schools to begin to examine this area of work.

“In your opinion, how well do young people from different ethnic, faith or cultural backgrounds mix or get on in East Sussex?” Three-quarters of young people responded positively to the question, 20% said that they did not know, and 5% responded negatively.

“Do you have friends from different ethnic, faith or cultural backgrounds?” 71% said they have friends from different ethnic, faith or cultural backgrounds, 15% did not know and 12% stating that they did not.

c) Young people’s experiences of bullying behaviour

“Have you been bullied in school in the last 12 months?” Of the 3863 responses, 69.2% of young people answered positively to this question, although 30.8% (1208) said they had experienced bullying at school in the last 12 months. Although, levels of bullying behaviour did vary between schools, based upon data from the two cohort group the figure of 29.9% is now considered to be benchmark indicator for the local authority, against which schools can now judge themselves.

Of the 30.8%, 6% (221 respondents) feel they have experienced “a lot” of bullying. Of those who reported bullying in school, 38% (461 respondents) also reported being bullied outside of school, thereby recognising the potential double jeopardy for young people who experience bullying. Further analysis of data revealed bullying behaviour appeared to be evenly distributed across all year groups, with a slight decrease with each subsequent year group.

“What form did the bullying take?” (Young people could tick more than one box) A total of 2154 responses were recorded. The top three forms of bullying came out as verbal (934 responses), indirect (451 responses), defined as people spreading rumours and excluding you, and physical (427 responses). There were 172 reported incidents of cyberbullying, followed by prejudice based bullying with 78 recorded incidents of homophobic bullying and 92 reported racist bullying incidents.

Further analysis of the data revealed young women had a far greater tendency to be subjected to indirect bullying, and almost three times as likely as their male counterparts to be the target of cyberbullying.

“Who did you tell?” (Young people could tick more than one box) A total of 2470 responses were recorded with many young people reporting bullying behaviour to more than one person. The key individuals most commonly informed are a friend (609 responses), a parent or carers (593 responses), a member of school staff (486 responses). However, 231 said that they told no-one. Further analysis also showed that one in five of those who experienced ‘a lot’ of bullying told no-one about the bullying.

“Have you ever stayed away from school because of bullying?” A total of 1195 responses were recorded. Nearly a third (335) of young people who reported being bullied said they had stayed away from school as a direct result of the bullying.

How safe do you feel from being bullied or harassed outside of school? A total of 3836 responses were recorded, with over three-quarters (79%) of young people responded positively to the question, while 15% felt ‘not very safe’ and 5% feeling ‘not safe at all’.

d) Have you witnessed bullying?

“Have you seen any bullying in school over the last 12 months?” 3804 young people responded to this question. Just over half (52%) of all respondents said they have seen bullying in school over the last 12 months, of these 13% (498) stated they had seen “a lot” in their school.

What would you do now if you saw someone else being bullied? Young people could tick more than one box with a total of 3848 responses recorded. A very encouraging 77% of responses were positive and of these, a fifth of young people said they would intervene to try and stop the bullying, 22% would tell an adult, and 17% said they would comfort the victim.

“Have you seen any bullying outside school in the last 12 months?” 3664 young people responded to this question. 23% of young people say they had witnessed bullying outside of school, and of these 5% say they had witnessed ‘a lot’ of bullying.

e) Profile of those engaging in bullying behaviour

“Have you bullied anyone in the last year in school?” A total of 3664 responses or 82% of young people stating they have not bullied anyone in school over the last year, though 7% chose not to answer this question. Of the 11% (446) responses) who admitting bullying in school, 2% (80 responses) said they did it ‘a lot’. Further analysis of data found that of those engaging in bullying behaviour in school, 42% (188) also admitted to engaging in bullying behaviour outside of school.

“Have you bullied anyone in the last year outside of school?” 3664 or 86% young people said they have not bullied anyone outside of school over the last year, with 5.4% not answering the question. Of the 8.6% (298 responses) who admitting bullying outside school, 2% (67 responses) said they did it ‘a lot’.

Summary

Data from the two cohort groups who have so far taken part in the SSS, suggests that the figure of 29.9% is a reliable benchmark for the local authority. However, we are mindful of the significant difference in reported incidents of bullying behaviour between the SSS and TellUs3.

Schools have already used the data in a number of positive ways. So far this has included: the development of specific PSHE and/or Citizenship lessons on the importance of friendships, differences in bullying behaviour between genders, and cyberbullying and e-safety; to support requests for additional staff training, particularly in addressing homophobic language and bullying; and to find ways to enable young people to feel more confident about reporting incidents of bullying in schools. A small number of schools are also planning to administer the survey again, following a programme of anti-bullying work, to measure progress.

Prior discussion with schools about the importance of providing feedback to young people has ensured that schools are using a variety of mechanisms to feedback the survey findings as well as the actions that are being taken as a result of findings. So far schools have given feedback via the school council, in tutor group discussions, the schools newsletter and in special school assemblies.

Dissemination of the survey findings as also taken place via County Council press releases and a range of local news articles, the Anti-Bullying Alliance regional coordinators and with other local authorities engaged in similar activities.

Conclusion

It is anticipated that, as secondary schools embed the survey into the academic calendar during national anti-bullying week, and as staff and pupils become familiar with the survey, then the process of administering it will become easier.

Overall, the SSS has been well received by schools across East Sussex, with many of the initial concerns about data protection, confidentiality and sensitivities about actual reported levels of bullying behaviour now overcome.

Taking account of the issues related to the TellUs3 findings, it is felt the SSS provides a more accurate and reliable benchmark of the reported incidents of bullying behaviour across the local authority, and will enable individual schools to monitor the progress and success of their anti-bullying work.

Finally, the survey could not have taken place without the co-operation of the young people and teachers of the schools involved. Their views are obviously the most important part of this work and their contribution is much appreciated.